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Senate

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, ruler of all nature, as Hurricane Rita's flood waters recede, we pause to thank You for Your goodness and mercy. We praise You for lighter-than-expected damage, for spared lives, and for generous hearts.

We thank You for the evidence of national and international unselfishness the forces of nature have shown us and for the opportunity to grow in grace by helping others.

Bless our lawmakers today as they continue their task of building a better nation and world. Guide them with Your providence and make them examples of civility and integrity. Give them the wisdom to listen to the whisper of conscience and to choose the harder right.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we formally begin the consideration of John Roberts to be Chief Justice of the United States. In a moment, we will proceed to executive session to begin the debate on that nomination. In order to facilitate the debate on the Roberts nomination, we have set aside controlled time so that Members can better plan when they will be speaking to the body. I know many Members will want to come to the floor to speak on this important nomination. However, I hope Senators do not feel compelled to make lengthy statements. We will stay each night this week if the Senators desire to speak, but I would like to reach an agreement as to when that final vote will occur so that Members can plan accordingly. I will be discussing a time certain for that vote with the Democratic leader as we go forward with the debate.

Last week, I announced that we would have a vote today beginning approximately 5:30. Shortly, we expect to have that vote locked in by unanimous consent. We have about 24 nominations that are pending on the Executive Calendar. We will likely set one of those pending nominations for a vote. As always, we will alert Members when that vote is set.

Also, this week we need to address the continuing resolution as we end the fiscal year. We will continue working on the appropriations process following the vote on the Roberts nomination.

The appropriations bill for the Defense Department will be reported this week, and we expect to quickly turn to that bill.

Having said that, I look forward to a good debate and good discussion on John Roberts, followed by the vote on his confirmation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN G. ROBERTS, JR. TO BE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider Executive Calendar No. 317, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of John G. Roberts, Jr., of Maryland, to be Chief Justice of the United States.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, 19 years ago today, on September 26, 1986, William Rehnquist took the oath of office as the 16th Chief Justice of the United States.

Today, nearly two decades later, the Senate is faced with a unique opportunity to provide advice and consent on the nomination of John Roberts as our Nation's 17th Chief Justice.

As we debate Judge Roberts' nomination over the next few days, I ask that we think about the task the American people have entrusted to us.

Over the next few days, they will be watching and waiting. They will be scoring us on how well we perform our duty.

They will be looking to see if we proceed in an honorable and dignified manner—to see if we work together in a bipartisan way—and to see if we put principle above partisan politics.

The qualifications they expect us to look at for a Supreme Court Justice are unambiguous. They expect an individual who is qualified, an individual who will faithfully interpret the Constitution, an individual who will check politics and personal views at the door of the Court, an individual who will approach every case with a fair and open mind.

As Senators, our duties are clear. The question now becomes, and the question each of us must answer is, Is

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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